

RADIATION DETECTOR

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a novel radiation detector that can be used for detecting in position ionizing radiations such as charged particles, photons,
10 X-rays and neutrons. In the detector according to the invention, the primary electrons resulting from the ionization of the gas by radiation are multiplied under the effect of a high local intensity electric gradient field, and collected by the same structure.

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2. Description of the Prior Art

Radiation detectors exploiting the process of ionization and charge multiplication in gases have been in use with
20 continued improvements for many years. Methods for obtaining large "stable" proportional gains in gaseous detectors are a continuing subject of investigation in the detectors community.

25 Among the most widely known of such detectors is the

parallel plate chamber (PPC). PPC has a counter obtained by means of two parallel grids spaced from one another by a few millimeters and between which the electrons are multiplied. This zone located between the two parallel
30 grids is called the "multiplication zone". Thus, the multiplication zone of such a detector is in the form of a single volume defined by the two grids. Due to the fact that it constitutes a single volume of a relatively large size, such a counter suffers from the disadvantage of
35 being very breakdown sensitive. Moreover, the counters of such parallel plate detectors can only have a limited spatial resolution and due to the plate/grid thickness cannot be arranged in such a way as to form detectors having varied shapes. Finally, because the avalanche size
40 depends exponentially on the distance of the primary ionization from the anode, PPC are not proportional counters.

Another type of gas detector is the multiwire
45 proportional chamber (MWPC), which has a plurality of equidistant anode wires held taut in one plane. On either side of said plane are placed two taut grids forming cathodes. Electron multiplication takes place in the vicinity of the wires, because at this location there is
50 a high electric field. However, the MWPC suffers from an

intrinsic limitation: at high radiation rates, the production of slow positive ions results in the build-up of a space charge, which interferes with the counting and reduces gain. In addition, the physical characteristics
55 of the MWPC does not permit the detector to have varied shapes.

A way to overcome on limitations of gain in parallel plate and multiwire proportional chambers (MWPC) is the
60 multistep chamber, thereafter designated as MSC. In MSC chambers, two parallel grid electrodes mounted in the drift region of a conventional gas detector and operated as parallel plate multipliers allow to preamplify drifting electrons and transfer them into the main
65 detection element. Operated with a photosensitive gas mixture, the MSC chamber allows to reach gains large enough for single photodetection in ring-imaging CHERENKOV detectors, thereafter designated as RICH.

70 A more recent gas detector type is the microstrip gas chamber (MSGC). In the MSGC, the counter consists of coplanar electrodes etched on an insulating support. The major disadvantage of this detector is its relatively low gain limited essentially to 5,000, because it does not
75 permit the superimposing of several counters. In

addition, like the counters of parallel plate detectors described hereinbefore, the counters of these microstrip detectors have anisotropic multiplication zones localized on very thin tracks (approximately 10 micrometers), which
80 makes them very sensitive to discharge damage. These detectors also suffer from the disadvantage of being relatively fragile and susceptible to aging.

Motivated by the problems mentioned above, a large effort
85 has been devoted to find more rugged alternatives to MSGCs. Accordingly, a new class of detector called Micro-Pattern Detectors (MPD) developed.

F. BARTOL and al. Journal of Physics III 6 (1996), 337,
90 introduced a new detector device (MPD) designated compteur à trous (CAT), which substantially consists of a matrix of holes which are drilled through a cathode metallic foil. The insertion of an insulating sheet between cathode and buried anodes allows to guarantee a
95 good gap uniformity and to obtain high gains.

Another radiation detector device (MPD) was introduced at about the same time by Y. GIOMATARIS and al., Nucl. Instrum. And Meth. A376 (1996) 29. This detector
100 thereafter designated as MICROMEGAS is a high gain gas

detector using as multiplying element a narrow gap parallel plate avalanche chamber. In a general point of view, such a detector consists of a gap in the range 50 to 100 micrometer which is realized by stretching a thin metal micromesh electrode parallel to a read-out plane. Very high gain and rate capabilities have been attained due to the special properties of electrode avalanches in very high electric fields. A major inconvenience of this detector lies in the necessity of stretching and maintaining parallel meshes with great accuracy. The presence of strong electrostatic attraction forces adds to the problem, particularly for large size of the detectors. To overcome this drawback, heavy support frames are required and the introduction in the gap of closely spaced insulating lines or pins with the ensuing complication of assembly and loss of efficiency is necessary.

A further, still more recent gas detector type (MPD) is the gas electron multiplier (GEM). This detector consists of a set of holes, typically 50-100 micrometers. in diameter, chemically etched through a metal-kapton-metal thin foil composite, each of which produce a local electric field amplitude enhancement proper to generate in the gas an electron avalanche from each one of the

primary electrons. The GEM acts as an "electrostatic lens", and operates as an amplifier of given gain for the primary electrons. Charge detection is achieved by a separate readout electrode.

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Exploiting the polyimide-etching technology developed for making GEM electrodes, other MPD detectors have been developed such as the microgroove (Bellazzini et al., Nucl. Instrum. And Meth. A424 (1998) 444) and the micro-
135 wire (Adeva et al., Nucl. Instrum. And Meth. A435 (1999) 402) detectors.

However, all MPD devices exhibit a fast increasing discharge rate with voltage when exposed to high rates or
140 highly ionizing alpha particles, hence a limitation in gain. In order to overcome this limitation, several devices (notably GEM devices) can be stacked for further gain, but to the expense of mechanical flexibility.

145 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is provides a radiation detector of very high performance that overcomes the above-mentioned drawbacks of the radiation detectors of the prior art.

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The present invention provides a radiation detector that appears to hold both the simplicity of the MSGC chamber and the high field advantages of the MICROMEGAS, CAT and GEM radiation detectors, however mechanically much
155 simpler to implement, less prone to discharge damage and more versatile in use.

More particularly, in accordance with the present invention, a radiation detector is provided in which
160 primary electrons are released into a gas by ionizing radiations in a drift chamber and then drift to detection electrodes by means of an electric field. The radiation detector of the invention includes three superimposed planes of longitudinal electrodes, arranged in a non
165 parallel geometry when viewed from above (e.g. each of three planes being at a 60 degree angle when compared to the others), so that they form a lattice. Each crossing of the three superimposed longitudinal electrodes provides an intense electric field gradient which acts as
170 a gas electron multiplier (avalanches) for the primary electron produced in the drift chamber. In addition, the three superimposed planes of longitudinal electrodes also act as a read out device collecting the charges created during the avalanche process. Accordingly, the lattice of

175 longitudinal electrodes acts at the same time as an
electron multiplier and as read out device.

The resulting radiation detector allows to detect
particles with great sensitivity, and determine their
180 position with great accuracy. It can be used with great
benefits in particle physics, but also in medical
imaging, gas pressure gauges, materials inspections and
many other industrial fields.

185 The objects, advantages and other particular features. of
the present invention will become more apparent upon
reading of the following non-restrictive description of
preferred embodiments thereof which are given by way of
example only with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- Fig. 1 is a schematic view of a radiation detector
according to an embodiment of the present invention.
- 195 - Fig. 2 is a schematic view from above of the
radiation detector according to the invention.

- Fig. 3(a) is a schematic view from above of one of the planes formed by parallel conductive wires, according to an embodiment of the present invention.
- 200 - Fig. 3(b) is a schematic view from the side of one of the planes formed by parallel conductive wires, according to an embodiment of the present invention.
- Fig. 4(a) is a schematic view from above of one of the planes formed by parallel conductive wires, according to another embodiment of the present invention.
- 205 - Fig. 4(b) is a schematic view from the side of one of the planes formed by parallel conductive wires, according to another embodiment of the present invention.
- 210 - Fig. 5 is a flowchart of signal processing for a radiation detector according to the invention.
- Fig. 6(a) to (i) is a step-by-step schematic for the fabrication of a 3- planes dual-purpose physical structure with polyimide spacers.
- 215 - Fig. 7 represents a view from above of a radiation detector according to the invention.
- Fig. 8(a) to (c) are experimental spectra obtained using a three-planes radiation detector according to the invention using a Fe 55 radiation source.
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DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a radiation detector in
225 which primary electrons are released into a gas by
ionizing radiation from a radiation source (10) and are
caused to drift to read-out electrodes (1) by means of an
electric field (2) generated by applying a negative
tension to a drifting electrode (11) located near the
230 radiation source (10); characterized in that it comprises

- a first set of longitudinal electrodes (1) disposed
parallel to each other to form a first plane (4)
closest to the radiation source (10), said first plane
235 being substantially perpendicular to said electric
field (2) and
- a second set of longitudinal electrodes (1) disposed
parallel to each other to form a second plane (4'),
said second plane being superposed and parallel to
240 said first plane (4) and
- a third set of longitudinal electrodes (1) disposed
parallel to each other to form a third plane (4''),
said third plane being superposed and parallel to said
first and second planes (4) and (4'),

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wherein, when viewed from above, the direction of the longitudinal electrodes (1) in each of said planes forms an angle with the direction of the longitudinal electrodes (1) in each of the other planes, each crossing
250 of the electrodes producing a local electric field gradient, and

wherein the longitudinal electrodes (1) in the respective planes are applied progressively positive tensions
255 relatively to the drifting electrode (11) when going from the plane (4) closest to the drifting electrode to the plane (4'') farthest from the drifting electrode, said plane (4'') farthest from the drifting electrode being applied a positive tension. The electrodes in this plane
260 are intended to collect the electrons.

The gas used in the radiation detector can be any gas or combination of gas susceptible of being ionized and undergo avalanches, such as Helium, Argon, Xenon,
265 Methane, Carbon dioxide, Argon / Carbon Dioxide combination, etc.

The respective planes of longitudinal electrodes (1) are preferably, but without limitation, separated from each
270 others by 40-60 micrometers.

The use of three planes allows to resolve positional ambiguities in multi-particle bursts, and represents an advantage over two-dimensional detectors.

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In a preferred embodiment, the angle between the directions of the longitudinal electrodes (1) in each of said planes is 60 degrees, and the longitudinal electrodes (1) in a given plane cross the longitudinal electrodes (1) in the two other planes at the same points (5) where the longitudinal electrodes (1) in these two other planes cross.

The common crossing point of the electrodes in the three planes ensures a strong electric field gradient at the level of the crossings, allowing more important electron avalanches.

In another embodiment, the longitudinal electrodes forming the planes are conductive strips (6) (metallic or other conductive material).

These conductive strips can be spaced by spacers (7) located at the crossing points (5) of said conductive

295 strips. Said spacers (7) may be made of glue, polyimide
or any other suitable materials.

Mechanical resistance of the detector's physical
structure (3) is provided by epoxy, polyimide or any
300 other suitable materials.

These embodiments are made through etching techniques as
described in the "experimental procedures" section.

305 In another embodiment, the longitudinal electrodes
disposed forming the planes are conductive wires
(8) (metallic or other conductive material).

In a first sub-embodiment, said conductive wires (8) are
310 woven with non-conductive wires (9) to form a mesh, said
conductive wires (8) being oriented according to a first
axis, and said non-conductive wires (9) being oriented
according to a second axis, said second axis being
perpendicular to the first axis.

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In another sub-embodiment, said conductive wires (8) are
individually alternated with non-conductive wires (9) in
said first axis. This allows to obtain perfectly parallel
and geometrically in-phase conductive wires despite their

320 passing alternatively above and below the perpendicular
non-conductive wires.

The sub-embodiments just described can be made by
standard weaving techniques known to the person skilled
325 in the art.

The conductive strips (6) or wires (8) can be made in any
conductive materials, such as Tungsten or other metallic
or non-metallic conductive materials.

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The detector's physical structure (3) according to the
invention can be mechanically flexible, depending on the
materials used and the size of the device. Accordingly,
the detector's physical structure (3) can take various
335 shapes such as cylindrical, semi-spherical or other
shapes.

The signal resulting from the individual longitudinal
electrodes in each superposed planes is amplified,
340 registered and properly treated in a multi-channel
analyzer providing energy and location information for
the particles detected by the detector.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

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Fabrication of a 3- planes detector, polyimide spacers
and polyimide support.

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STEP 1: Begin with a piece of double-sided copper-clad polyimide (18). Fig. 6(a).

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STEP 2: The middle pattern is transferred onto one side of the two-sided copper-clad polyimide piece, using standard photolithography processes. Fig. 6(b).

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STEP 3: A piece of one-sided copper-clad polyimide (19) is prepared by completely etching the copper from one side of a two-sided polyimide piece. Fig. 6(c).

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STEP 4: The one-sided copper-clad polyimide piece (19) is then glued onto the top of the middle-patterned polyimide piece (18). Fig. 6(d).

STEP 5: The top and bottom patterns are transferred onto both sides of the piece using the standard photolithography processes. Care must be taken to ensure that the cross-over points of the

370 strips on all three planes are precisely
aligned. Fig. 6(e).

STEP 6: The peripheral areas (20) of the detector (on
both sides), except in the area active for
375 detection (21), are protected with a thin
coating of polymer resin (22) that resists the
polyimide etching solution. Fig. 6(f) and 7
(g).

380 STEP 7: The polyimide of the active area (21) is etched
until the glue encapsulating the middle pattern
is exposed, and the polymer resin (22) is
removed. Polyimide spacers (7) under the copper
patterns subsist Fig. 6(h).

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STEP 8: The remaining glue in the active area (21) is
removed. Fig. 6(i). A view from above of the
resulting radiation detector is provided in
Fig. 7.

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Experimental results with 3-planes metallic strips and
polyimide spacers detector

A 3-planes detector with metallic strips and polyimide
spacers was successfully implemented according to the

395 fabrication method above and shown to detect ionizing
radiation from a Fe 55 radiation source. For the purpose
of the experiment, the individual longitudinal electrodes
in each plane were electrically connected. Therefore, the
experiment demonstrates the detecting abilities of the
400 detector without positioning function. It would be easy
for a person skilled in the art to add the 2-dimensional
positioning function by keeping the longitudinal
electrodes isolated from each other, registering the
signal for each electrode separately, and treating the
405 resulting signal in an appropriate manner (see Fig. 5).

Main characteristics of the detector:

- Radiation source (at the top): Fe 55
- distance of the radiation source to the top plane: 4
410 millimeters.
- drifting electrode tension : - 2000 V
- top plane tension : - 350 V
- medium plane tension : 0 V
- bottom plane tension: + 350 v
- 415 - gas: Argon 91%; Carbon dioxide 9%
- gas pressure: atmospheric pressure
- spacers: polyimide

Signal detection:

420 After proper amplification, the signal detected shows the
typical spectrum for Fe 55, with peaks at 3 and 5.9 keV.
Fig. 8(a) represents the spectrum detected by the plane
(at +350V tension) farthest from the drifting electrode,
which collects the electrons. Fig. 8(b) represent the
425 spectrum detected by the middle plane (at ground). Fig
8(c) represent the spectrum detected by the plane closest
to the drifting electrode (at -350V tension). The middle
plane and the plane closest to the drifting electrode
both collect the positive ions.

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